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ABSTRACT

To determine the appropriateness of courses and programs offered to teacher education students at the University of Southern Mississippi, an annual follow-up of graduates is conducted. Each first year teacher in a sample from the total group is treated in the following manner in order to get needed information. First, a teacher education faculty member observes the teacher and evaluates performance based on the objectives determined in the teacher preparation program of the university. Additionally, the former student is asked to complete a form which seeks to determine the degree to which the graduate finds utility in the various courses taken at the university. A third activity for the faculty member is obtaining an evaluation of the teacher's performance by an immediate superior. All of this is done, not to evaluate the teacher, but to determine the quality of training provided by the university. Third year teachers are asked to do steps two and three in order to obtain a view of the teachers' perceptions of the appropriateness of their training after a longer period of experience. Data obtained have been used to alter courses and programs in the teacher education program. (Author/JD)

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FOLLOW-UP OF TEACHER EDUCATION GRADUATES

1982

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGY

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

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SP026394

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GSR

FOLLOW-UP OF TEACHER EDUCATION GRADUATES

1982

A recent addition to follow-up activities in the College of Education and Psychology holds much promise for evaluation of programs and for long-range planning. Beginning in the fall semester, 1981, an annual study was funded by the University, which is intended to be far-reaching in its effects. The funding has been made a separate University budget item, thereby assuring its continuation in subsequent budget years. The study was done as follows:

1. A sample of 40 first-year teachers (1981 graduates) and 20 third-year teachers (1979 graduates) was chosen from among USM graduates in South Mississippi. The sample was chosen from a list of teachers in South Mississippi provided by the State Department of Education.

2. First-year teachers were visited by three University professors who are trained in what to observe. Each professor spent two hours in the classroom of each of the 40 teachers making observations of skills that should have been developed in the teacher education program. A standard form was completed by each faculty member to be used in analysis of data.

3. Each of the 20 third-year teachers was visited and given an evaluation instrument to be completed related to University preparation for the job they hold. These instruments were sent back to the College of Education and Psychology for analysis.

4. Supervisors (usually the principal) of each teacher chosen in the sample were given an evaluation form to be completed and returned to the College of Education and Psychology related to the skills and performance of the USM graduate. These were analyzed as a group.

5. First-year teachers were given an evaluation instrument to be returned which included a listing of professional courses taken and their relevance and applicability to actual practice. These data were tabulated and analyzed.

In no instance were the data used to evaluate performance of former students as individuals. Collective data were used to look at the results of training received and how it is being utilized in the classroom. The intent is solely an evaluation of programs in the College of Education and Psychology, not an evaluation of any individual or school.

Data obtained in the months of January and February, 1982, were tabulated and analyzed to produce these findings. Table 1 indicates numbers and percentages of graduates on which complete follow-up was done during this period. As indicated, 42 teachers were visited, 28 being first-year

and 14 being third-year. A total of 21 were elementary teachers, 13 were secondary teachers, and eight were special education teachers.

Table 1

Number of First- and Third-Year Teachers by Teaching Level

Level	1st-year Graduates	3rd-year Graduates	Total
Elementary	15	6	21
Secondary	9	4	13
Special Education	4	4	8
Total	28	14	42

One feature of the follow-up was the completion of a program rating sheet by the former student. The teacher was asked to rate the quality of various aspects of the teacher education program at the University of Southern Mississippi. Table 2 contains data obtained from this program rating questionnaire. It was handed to the teacher by a faculty member from the University to be completed and mailed to the Office of the Dean, College of Education and Psychology.

An examination of extremes in mean scores indicates that graduates would be better served if they received more assistance in preparation for the National Teacher Examinations and if they had better pre-student teaching experi-

Table 2

Teacher Education Program Rating by First- and Third-Year Teachers

Aspect of Program	Rating							Mean	Std. Dev.
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Faculty			2	6	11	18	4	5.39	1.02
Interaction with faculty		1	2	9	11	12	7	5.23	1.25
Interaction with advisor	1	2	3	11	6	7	12	5.09	1.64
Contacts with fellow students			4	3	12	11	9	5.35	1.24
Preparation for National Teacher Exam	4	6	4	8	15	4	1	3.95	1.59
Elective courses			5	9	14	11	2	4.90	1.09
Required courses			1	9	15	13	4	5.23	.98
Library		1	2	7	9	14	9	5.42	1.27
Curriculum Materials Center			3	6	8	12	11	5.55	1.25
Pre-student teaching field experiences	2	4	6	9	7	8	4	4.37	1.67
Student teaching experiences	1	1	1	9	11	18	2	5.95	1.34

Rating Scale: 1 (Poor) through 7 (Superior)

ences. They also indicated a high degree of displeasure with the selection of elective courses. This is not unexpected since most students in teacher education have no room for elective courses due to the heavy load of courses required by certification, accreditation, the College of Education and Psychology core, and the University core.

The other factors were all rated highly enough that the graduates seem to be fairly well satisfied with them given the high means and narrow standard deviations in most cases.

Another part of the student rating sheet called for a response as to why the teacher chose to attend the University of Southern Mississippi. This was included in order to assist in decisions about recruiting students. The graduate was given the opportunity to rate six factors as to their relative importance to the decision to attend USM. A response range of 1-7 ("none" to "much") was used. Table 3 depicts the means and standard deviations for each of the six factors.

This part of the questionnaire yielded results which show that proximity to the institution was the overriding factor in most cases. The availability of the desired program also indicates the need to continue to offer a wide range of choice for the student in the area. The wide range of response to the financial aid issue was not unexpected since one is either eligible or ineligible for

such aid and that factor is known prior to entry. What is a possible area of concern is that the reputation of the faculty had less to do with the decision than four other factors. The College should probably give some attention to building the faculty's image in the public schools and junior colleges.

Table 3

Students' Reasons for Choosing to Study at the University of Southern Mississippi

Factor	Means of Responses	Std. Dev.
Reputation of the University	4.93	1.48
Reputation of College of Education	4.93	1.77
Availability of financial aid	3.53	2.58
Reputation of faculty	4.23	1.85
Availability of desired program	5.53	1.84
Proximity of USM to home	6.33	1.13

N = 43.

Rating Scale: 1 (None) through 7 (Much)

Another critical issue in teacher education is placement in positions. The study sought to determine how USM graduates went about obtaining teaching jobs. Table 4 indicates the responses registered in eight different categories. Some responded in more than one category since they had used a variety of approaches.

Table 4

Method of Obtaining First Teaching Job
After Graduation from USM

Method	Number	Percent
Used own initiative	28	65.1
Assistance of advisor	1	2.3
Assistance of other faculty	2	4.7
Assistance of USM Placement Office	2	4.7
Assistance of private agency	0	0.0
Returned to previous position	1	2.3
Assistance from relatives and friends	14	32.6
Other*	8	18.6

N = 43.

*Other included school where substitute teaching, referral by principal of school where student teaching was done, and took position in school where student teaching was done.

As can be readily seen, those who get out and actively seek employment or those who know someone influential seem to find jobs. It was encouraging to see the number who stated that they got jobs based on their performance in student teaching, sometimes in the school where student teaching was done.

Teacher Rating of Required Courses

Administrators need to know what values are placed on various course offerings which are required in the

process of teacher training. Former students were given an opportunity to rate courses taken as to their value in teaching. A scale of 1 to 5 was used, with 1 = very little and 5 = very much. Table 5 indicates the mean of responses and standard deviations of courses required in Elementary Education.

As can be readily observed, the former students expressed their opinion that courses in music education, physical education for teachers, and career education were of little value to them in teaching their classes. Cause for some concern can be expressed about those courses whose means fall below the 3.50 level. Those include courses in social studies for elementary teachers, art for teachers, foundations of education, and introduction to elementary education. Particularly high marks were given to courses in teaching language arts, developing reading skills, methods and materials in children's literature, science for elementary teachers, kindergarten and primary education, diagnosis and remediation of reading disability, and audio-visual education. Comments by students regarding specific courses are included in a special section of this report.

Special Education

A similar response was requested from special education teachers. Listed in Table 6 are ratings of the value of courses in the special education curriculum.

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations of Ratings
of Courses in Elementary Education

Course	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
CIE 343	18	3.50	1.29
CIE 425	14	3.50	1.34
Field Experiences (BOT)	43	3.85	1.72
CIE 301	21	3.90	1.26
CIE 305	21	3.19	1.72
CIE 306	20	4.40	.82
CIE 309	20	4.10	1.07
CIE 317	21	4.09	1.26
MED 361	20	2.50	1.47
ARE 309	19	3.32	1.38
PED 320	11	2.09	1.58
PED 321	9	1.78	1.39
SCE 432	21	4.05	1.20
CIE 403	20	4.00	1.12
CIE 407	15	3.60	1.30
CIE 412	19	4.11	1.33
REF 400	19	3.05	1.47
REF 416	21	4.05	1.02
REF 469	21	3.71	1.42
EPY 370	20	3.95	1.27
EPY 374	20	3.70	1.26
CIE 300	16	3.31	1.58
CIE 422	9	1.89	1.45
SPE 400	14	3.79	1.25

Rating Scale: 1 = very little value
5 = very much value

Table 6

Means and Standard Deviations of Course Ratings in Special Education

Course	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
SPE 402	7	3.71	.76
EPY 370	7	3.43	1.51
EPY 372	7	3.43	1.27
EPY 374	8	2.88	1.46
CIE 306	7	3.29	1.25
CIE 309	8	4.25	.88
SPE 401	8	3.13	1.25
SPE 403	8	3.50	1.20
SPE 430	8	4.25	.70
SPE 431	8	3.63	1.30
SPE 432	5	2.00	1.41
SPE 433	5	1.40	.89
SPE 440	8	4.13	1.13
SPE 411	7	3.86	1.46
SPE 450	6	2.83	1.83
SPE 451	5	2.20	1.09
SPE 470	5	2.40	1.67
SHS 401	5	4.20	.45
REF 400	7	3.14	1.06
REF 469	8	4.13	.64
SPE 400	7	4.14	.89
Career Education	5	1.40	.89
Phy. Ed. Elective	8	2.75	1.67
Sp. Ed. Practicum	8	3.88	1.13

Rating Scale: 1 = little value
5 = much value

Noteworthy is the small number of courses which the special education teachers indicated as extremely useful. Courses in developing skills in reading, learning disabilities, mental retardation, language and speech development, tests and measurements, and survey of the exceptional child were felt to be very valuable to the teachers surveyed. They gave poor marks to many of the large number of courses required of special education majors. Many fell below the 3.50 mean level but particularly low marks were given to courses in individual programming for the handicapped at both levels, behavioral management, organizational procedures and career education. It is possible that we are trying to teach such a variety of courses in special education that many of them have not enough meaning when translated into practice.

Secondary Education

Students majoring in a content area or in secondary education were polled about the usefulness of the professional courses required at USM. Table 7 gives a review of responses received. A five-point scale was used with 1 = little value and 5 = much value.

Analyzing the data from Table 7, it is quickly apparent that secondary teachers value the methods courses more highly than any other part of their experiences. They also indicated above average utility for courses in psychology as well as tests and measurement.

Table 7

Means and Standard Deviations of Course Ratings in Secondary Education

Course	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
CIS 313	12	4.08	.79
Major Area Methods	14	3.93	1.26
Methods Course Field Experience	12	2.83	1.40
REF 400	11	3.45	1.29
REF 416	8	2.38	1.92
REF 469	14	3.64	1.28
EPY 372	14	3.57	1.02
EPY 374	14	3.57	1.02
CIS 310	7	2.57	1.99
CIS 422	8	1.00	0.00
SPE 400	7	1.86	1.46

Rating Scale: 1 = little value

5 = much value

Obviously, teachers find little value in the recently added courses in reading, special education, and career education. Departments should seek more direct methods of structuring these courses to provide more meaningful experiences for the students. Another area of concern is the low value placed on audio-visual education. Elementary teachers rated this area rather high compared to secondary teachers. Some method should be sought to make the course valuable for both groups.

Supervisor's Ratings of Graduates

Another method of checking our programs in providing a quality teacher education program is to ask those who employ our products how well they are performing. The immediate supervisor of the teacher was contacted and asked to complete an evaluation. These were usually done by the school principal. Data related to the teachers' performance as a group are presented in Table 8.

In all cases the supervisors rated USM graduates relatively high as evidenced by all means being in the middle to high 5's. If any meaningful analysis is to be made to base program decisions upon, another approach must be taken. It was decided to call attention to those performance areas where supervisors rated one or more teachers as poor (1 or 2 on the scale). This investigation showed that two of our graduates were deficient in oral communication, one in written communication, one in general

Table 8

Supervisors' Ratings of USM Teacher Education Graduates

Performance Area	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Oral communication	44	5.43	1.00
Written communication	44	5.34	1.03
General knowledge	44	5.40	1.06
Awareness of patterns of physical and social development in students	44	5.25	1.12
Diagnosis of learning needs	44	5.18	1.26
Preparation of appropriate learning activities based on instructional objectives	44	5.41	1.26
Rapport with students	44	5.50	1.21
Rapport with teachers	44	5.75	1.26
Classroom management	44	5.16	1.48
Record keeping	44	5.30	1.15
Understanding of different cultures	44	5.29	1.04
Testing and reporting to parents	44	5.27	1.13
Use of media and materials	44	5.06	1.08
Participation in professional activities	44	5.09	1.05
General rating of teachers	44	5.41	1.01

knowledge, one in awareness of patterns of physical and social growth in students, one in diagnosis of learning needs, two in preparation of appropriate learning activities, two in rapport with teachers, two in classroom management, and one in understanding of different cultural groups. Lower means in the group can possibly lead to the conclusion that our students need more help in how to use media and materials. They also need to be taught the importance of participation in professional activities. Further work should be directed toward learning about classroom management, diagnosis of learning needs, and other skills related to the teacher's ability to deal directly with the child.

An interesting point to ponder is the fact that the general rating of teachers (5.41) was higher than all the other categories with the exception of oral communication (5.43) and rapport with teachers (5.75).

University Coordinators' Ratings of Graduates

As was explained in the first section of this report, three coordinators from the University of Southern Mississippi were assigned to visit the first-year teachers and complete an evaluation of their teaching. Forty-one items were included on the observation sheet. A scale of 1 to 5 was used. The observers used 1 for poor, 2 for below average, 3 for average, 4 for above average, and 5

for superior. Space was also provided for indicating that the area being checked was not observed. Therefore, there are many areas where more responses were given by observers than in others due to the "not observed" rating. Table 9 gives a complete look at the ratings given to the teachers. The figures are given for the combined group of first- and third-year teachers.

The means of observers' rating indicate that the graduates perform adequately in most areas. Only one area, appropriate dress, got a higher average mark than 4. Concern should be noted concerning the following areas of training in the teacher education program: the whole area of lesson planning and the whole area of teaching methods including teaching aids, lesson overviews, and summaries. Although not as weak as the two aforementioned areas, classroom management skills need to be learned in the process of teacher training.

Many critics of teacher education insist that teacher education students need more knowledge in the content for the teaching specialty. The results obtained in this study indicate that the students need more or better methods, not necessarily more content.

Summary and Conclusions

A follow-up study of teacher education graduates conducted at the University of Southern Mississippi during the 1981-82 school year indicated several areas of programs

Table 9

Observers' Ratings of Instruction:
First- and Third-Year Graduates

Category	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Appropriate dress	103	4.38	.97
Shows professional attitude	101	3.98	1.00
Punctuality	100	3.71	1.06
No annoying mannersims	103	3.92	.85
Enthusiasm in teaching	102	3.67	.99
Rapport with students	102	3.84	1.04
Relates well to students	102	3.90	.97
Communicates with students	102	3.88	1.01
Subject matter knowledge	95	3.94	.77
Awareness of student development characteristics	92	3.75	.85
Plans lessons allowing for motivation	87	3.06	1.15
Plans lessons allowing for materials	96	3.61	.93
Plans lessons allowing for objectives	52	3.48	.80
Plans lessons including procedures and time schedule	91	3.63	.96
Plans lessons including evaluation	61	3.45	.85
Plans lessons including assignments	51	3.51	.90
Identifies long-range goals	17	3.94	.75
Adapts objectives to students	69	3.65	.78
Uses appropriate teaching methods	101	3.64	.94
Uses variety of teaching aids	88	3.05	1.16

Table 9--Continued

Category	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Gives interesting lesson overview	56	3.03	1.04
Summarizes lesson adequately	47	3.32	.98
Demonstrates good writing skills	80	3.80	.83
Demonstrates good speaking skills	97	3.64	.79
Gives clear oral or written instructions	95	3.84	.81
Class control	98	3.85	1.08
Sets discipline standards	98	3.84	1.05
Enforces discipline standards	93	3.77	1.08
Promotes good class behavior	98	3.71	1.17
Approval of desired behavior	75	3.36	1.07
Organizes classroom for instruction	98	3.57	1.16
Maintains adequate records	53	3.54	.61
Arranges classroom environment	96	3.44	1.25
Demonstrates ability to work with different ability levels	72	3.68	.99
Groups class effectively	53	3.72	1.03
Involves all students in discussion	84	3.70	.92
Implements library skills	35	3.86	.81
Uses appropriate questioning	83	3.78	.90
Diagnoses student knowledge	86	3.76	.78
Utilizes teacher observation	89	3.80	.84
Constructs adequate tests	19	3.63	.68

Rating Scale: 1 = poor
5 = superior

which should be given attention. A sample of first- and third-year teachers was drawn from lists of graduates teaching in South Mississippi. Visits were made to these teachers for three purposes. (1) The teacher was asked to rate various aspects of the teacher education program. (2) The teacher's immediate superior was given a rating instrument by which to rate the teacher's performance as a teacher. (3) The first-year teacher was observed in action in the classroom by three University professors at different times. A rating of the teacher's performance was given.

Data were collected and analyzed. Due to the type data obtained, only means and standard deviations were used to indicate program strengths and weaknesses. Based on the data, the following conclusions and recommendations were made.

1. Students need some type of direct aid in preparation for the National Teachers Examinations.

2. Pre-student teaching experiences need to be expanded and made more meaningful. This is especially true for secondary teachers.

3. Since most of the students attend because of close proximity to USM, recruiting efforts should be directed toward area high schools and junior colleges. Recruitment should include emphasis on the quality of the faculty.

4. Elementary teachers gave low ratings to courses

in music education, physical education for teachers, and career education. Several other methods courses were not especially helpful for the elementary teachers.

5. Special education teachers, although not a large group, expressed less than enthusiastic support for several of the methods courses required in the curriculum, many of which are required for certification.

6. Secondary teachers expressed low rates of utility for several courses, especially those recently mandated in reading, special education, and career education.

7. Supervisors rated the performance of all teachers highly. Apparently they are pleased with the product they are getting.

8. Coordinators from the University who made observation visits to the teachers expressed several concerns as indicated in the data. Most important of the findings showed a need for better lesson planning and better teaching methods.

9. Classroom management needs to be emphasized in the training program.

Subsequent studies of graduates need to be structured so as to allow for comparison of ratings of the supervisors and University coordinators. Work should be done during Fall, 1982, to get the study re-structured to accomplish a more appropriate statistical treatment.